

LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 1, 2006, 4:00 P.M.
ACTON TOWN HALL

Present: Bettina Abe, Dave Cochrane, Bob Guba, Maura Herlihy, Gigi Hopkins, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Linda McElroy, Nan Millett, Rich Rhode, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman
Guest: Roy Socolow, U.S. Geological Survey representative

Meeting minutes: The October minutes were approved.

Request for streamgage shelter location change at Nashoba Brook: Roy Socolow, a U.S. Geological Survey representative, was at the meeting to ask for committee input about the USGS' plan to move and upgrade the stream gauge that is presently located between the Wheeler Lane parking area and the footbridge across the brook. The proposed new location is along an edge of the grassy area near the parking area, where there will be greater sun exposure for a solar panel and the best radio frequency transmission path to a satellite. The gauge will continue to monitor stream stage and flow rate, but the move and upgrade will allow the data to be available in near-real-time on the USGS website (<http://ma.water.usgs.gov/water/> ; select Real-Time Information / Streamflow Data). The relocation will require digging a small trench from the old location to the new (approximately 75 feet) in order to extend the water sensor line. There were no objections to this change, but Bob requested that where the trench crosses the trail be oriented at an angle to divert runoff away from the trail, which will help fix an existing erosion problem.

Tom clarified that the LSCom does not have any decision-making authority about the stream gauge, but he and the USGS appreciated having the group's input.

Lydia Rogers' presentation: The October 25 "Tracks and Trails" talk was a success, with the meeting room full and a crowd that came from several towns and included new faces. One suggestion was that the speaker be provided with a microphone, but Gigi said that this might not be allowed in the library. The problem of having to get out of the building by 9:00 was also noted.

Presentation about stone chamber: The presentation about the stone chamber, sponsored by the Friends of Pine Hawk, is tomorrow, Nov. 2, at 7:30 at the library. Linda, Nan, and Kimberley Connors, the project's liaison with the Acton Historical Commission, will be the speakers.

Grassy Pond field clearing: Bob is in the process of mowing the Grassy Pond field back to the stone wall along the woods' edge to halt the encroachment of trees into the field. He has also found that the center of the field is full of bittersweet, to the exclusion of grass, and he thinks that this area may need to be mowed during the summer.

Pacy Land: Jim reported that he, Laurie, Bob, and Roy Dennington, an interested resident of Prospect St., walked around on the Pacy Land, which is a mix of conservation land and municipal land bounded by Central St. and Prospect St. (with best access from Tupelo Way, off Prospect, though it can also be entered from Central St. and Tuttle Dr., also off Prospect). They found that the central part is quite wet, but there is one nice pine-covered hill and enough other dry areas that it would be possible to put in a trail.

Nagog Hill to Acorn Park connection: Tom reported that the developer of the Quail Ridge golf course is required to create a connection from Nagog Hill to Rt. 2A and that they have designated a corridor, approximately 150 to 200 feet wide, that connects to Acorn Park (a residential development off 2A opposite Harris Street) on which we can flag a trail. Philip said he would like to go out soon to do this; Jim and Bob will help.

Jenks blazing: As decided at last month's meeting, Jim, Bob, Linda, and Gigi met at Jenks to decide about the placement of wooden posts that will serve to blaze trails where there are no trees. Bob said that he has 4 x 4s that can be used for the posts, and it was decided that they should be 6 feet long and placed 2 feet deep. Jim volunteered to be one of the hole-diggers; Gigi will add arrow signs and paint the posts as needed as well as repaint some of the tree blazes that were painted over to "erase" them.

Town Forest blazing: Gigi mentioned that she will also put up some arrows and do blazing on the relocated blue trail after doing the Jenks blazing; she hopes to do the work this fall.

New gates at Town Forest: Gigi reported that the new heavy-duty gates have been installed at the Town Forest but that there are no padlocks (they're being held closed by wire). Bob said that the Natural Resources Dept. is responsible for supplying the padlocks.

Lumber for Heath Hen Meadow boardwalk segments: Bob reported that he has picked up stringers and planks that will be used for constructing four portable 8-foot boardwalk segments for placement at the muddy area at the cemetery end of the Heath-Hen Meadow boardwalk; the lumber is currently in his back yard.

Suggestions for canoe launch: Linda made two suggestions for the canoe launch site: (1) that we provide a picnic table; (2) that we consider some sort of small dock or ramp (although she agreed that the site is naturally well-suited for its purpose).

LSCom charter update: Jim reported that he recently met with John Murray, the Assistant Town Manager to discuss and clarify the nature of the LSCom charter. Mr. Murray stated that several years ago the BOS authorized us as an official town committee, and because of this, the Town's liability insurance covers our members. He was uncertain whether our term lengths are one year or three years, although advisory committees (as we are considered) usually have one-year terms. He said that selection of a chairperson is up to us to determine, so Jim said he would like us to discuss and vote on this soon, and he suggested that we align the chairperson's term with the length of members' terms.

At the beginning of the meeting, before this update, someone from the Town Clerk's office came to the meeting room to renew our terms on the committee. After administering an oath to the group, those present signed forms that had been prepared for each member. The term designated on the forms was three years. Those who weren't at the meeting should go to the Town Clerk's office sometime soon to be sworn in and sign their form.

Posting of old minutes on website: Jim stated that he has posted all meeting minutes since the beginning of 2002 on the Town's website (<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-1140>). The legal requirement is that a paper copy of all committee minutes be filed with the Town Clerk, but Jim feels that posting them on the website as well makes our process and our accomplishments more available to the public and provides greater transparency. He said he has read through all the past minutes he posted and suggested two small deletions, and he requested a vote about whether to approve the earlier minutes, with these deletions (a procedure that wasn't part of the committee's formal process until March 2005) and keep them on the website. Several reservations were expressed about approving the minutes so long after the fact, but the proposal was approved with two abstentions. However, because of the reservations, he said he won't post any earlier minutes on the website, but he will compile a full set of minutes since the founding of the committee for our own internal archives.

Open Space Committee update: Jim reported that a proposal was made to the Open Space Committee that conservation restrictions held by other organizations be placed on our conservation lands, in order to add another layer of protection for those lands. However, the Open Space Committee has now been informed that this would represent a "change in use" that requires the signature of the governor and the approval of the state House and Senate. This increases the difficulty of achieving the goal, so the OSC is discussing this further.

Bay Circuit Trail representative: Jim said that he is looking for a steward to take Dean Charter's place as

Bay Circuit Trail representative, a role that involves trail upkeep, attending an annual meeting, and being our communication link with the trail organization. Philip reported that Laurie had expressed interest in this, and since there were no other volunteers, Laurie was appointed to the position.

2007 meeting schedule: Prior to submitting the room request for our 2007 meetings, Jim asked whether we wanted to schedule any evening meetings. Dave, the only member present who might prefer this schedule, said that he doesn't think the time should be changed to accommodate only a few members. Bob requested that we schedule the room for summer meetings. Jim will make the reservations for the first Wednesday of most months (second Wednesday in January and September) at 4:00.

Pruning shears: Bob reported that he now has three new pruning shears, suitable for light pruning, that he would like to distribute to three stewards, who would keep them at their homes for use on their parcels. It was determined that Joan, Dave, and Jim will take them.

New t-shirts: Tom brought new LSCom t-shirts to the meeting. They are grayish with green lettering (Town logo and "STAFF") and come in M, L, and XL sizes and with short and long sleeves. Those not at the meeting can stop in at Tom's office at their convenience to pick up one or two.

Bluebird boxes: Gigi reported that Bob picked up 100 new bluebird boxes built by the high school woodworking classes for the Acton Bluebird Program. These will be given away to various groups and organizations such as Mass. Audubon, the Trustees of Reservations, and the Nashawtuc Country Club.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 6, at 4:00.